

Is Work the Forgotten Occupation?

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Is Work the Forgotten Occupation?

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Abstract

The Work and Industry Special Interest Section (WISIS) has the lowest membership of all 11 special interest sections within the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) (AOTA, 2013). It is noted that educational content regarding work and industry is lacking in occupational therapy programs (Ellexson, 2008) and there is lack of literature supporting work in the American Journal of Occupational Therapy (Corcoran, 2004). Work and Industry has been targeted in the Centennial Vision as a key practice area (AOTA, 2007), but interest in this area is low. A key observation is that the Special Interest Sections (SIS) appear to “silo” and avoid crossover to other SIS groups. Over the past ten years, there has been tremendous membership growth in AOTA membership (Clark, 2013), but no primary membership growth in WISIS. This project explores reasons for this low interest and offers suggestions to improve the insertion of work into other practice areas.

Learning Objectives

- The learner will identify methods where work and industry can be addressed in other practice areas.
- The learner will propose strategies the WISIS can employ to improve membership.
- The learner will describe methods to improve education regarding work and industry in occupational therapy curriculums.

WISIS & AOTA Membership

SIS Product	Membership Type	Number of Members (2013)
Work Program - Primary	Occupational Therapist	269
	Occupational Therapy Assistant	21
	Student	141

- AOTA membership between 2003 and 2013: Up 30% from 36,000 to 47,000; student membership up 300% (Clark, 2013)

SIS Membership: WISIS vs. Physical Disabilities 2006-2009				
SIS	Aug-06	Aug-07	Aug-08	Aug-09
OT: Work & Industry (Primary)	382	348	309	291
OT: Physical Disabilities (Primary)	4855	4787	4240	3856

Why the Lack of WISIS Members or Interest in WISIS?

- AOTA membership between 2003 and 2013: Up 30% from 36,000 to 47,000; student membership up 300% (Clark, 2013)
- Ergonomics may be a foreign concept
- Lack of supporting literature for this practice area
- Limited instruction about work in educational programs
- SIS's do not link together; Reductionistic view opposed to holistic occupational therapy
- Limited educational offerings in this practice area by the national organization; only 53 sessions at national conference between 2011-2014 and five continuing education articles in the past five years (AOTA, 2013)

Suggestions to Increase the Emphasis of Work With All Appropriate Clients

- Link work and industry to other special interest sections
- Become a role model and/or mentor
- Education of students
- Fieldwork students
- Write scholarly articles for peer reviewed journals
- Present at annual conference regarding work and industry in other practice areas
- Practice holistic occupational therapy

Work & Industry in Other SIS's

- The Aging Worker (Gerontology SIS): Assist employer with age related issues that could affect work; improve safety and productivity (Naumanen, 2006)
- Depression (Mental Health SIS): Assist employer to understand depression; match worker to the job; create supportive environments; address work in acute and outpatient care (Hauck & Chard, 2009)
- Breast Cancer (Physical Disabilities SIS): Target person and environment; match the worker to the job (Hoving, Broekhuizen, & Dresen, 2009, [I])
- Mild Head Injury and Mild Stroke (Physical Disabilities SIS): Identify and treat executive function deficits prior to return to work (O'Brien & Wolf, 2010, [II])

References: Available upon request

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